

critical digest

VOL. III No. 27

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The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

New York Theatre Openings This Week

Mary Rose-ANTA Playhouse, 3/4/51. Helen Hayes produced ANTA subscription limited run revival of James M. Barrie play with Leo G. Carroll, Patricia Collinge, Bethel Leslie and Daniel Reed. Directed by John Stix...The Autumn Garden-Coronet, 3/7/51. Lillian Hellman's new play starring Frederic March, Florence Eldridge, Jane Wyatt and Ethel Griffies...The Moon Is Blue-Miller, 3/8/51. Aldrich and Myers present F. Hugh Herbert's new comedy directed by Otto Preminger featuring Barbara Bel Geddes, Donald Cook, Barry Nelson and Neva Patterson...Romeo and Juliet-Broadhurst, 3/10/51. Dwight Deere Wiman's production of Shakespeare play directed by Peter Glenville. With Olivia de Havilland, Douglas Watson, Evelyn Varden and Isobel Elsom.

Digests of Current Reviews - more on back page

Springtime Folly-Golden, 2/27/51-2/28/51. Farce comedy of life in the garment industry which closed after second performance will probably go down in season's record as its worst play. Major item of interest to daily critics, all of whom panned production unmercifully, was how the script by Joseph Schulman, William and Martin Lieberson won angels and a producer. Cast headed by Jack Whiting, Mabel Taliaferro and Gilbert Mack was excused from criticism for the most part. Only kind word from Chapman, News, who hopes Maurice Fitzgerald gets another chance at a comedy role. Direction by Lewis Michel, sets by Louis Kennel also came in for their share of abuse. Allen, Women's Wear, did find a few farcical moments, but not nearly enough. Coleman, Mirror, awarded play his 1950-1951 booby prize.

The King of Friday's Men-Playhouse, 2/21/51-2/23/51. Michael J. Molloy's Irish folk tale, which was a hit several years ago, at Dublin's Abbey Theatre, did not fare as well on Broadway. Michael Grace's production was postponed twice, had director and cast changes and then lasted only four performances. Four pros, two so-so's, and the remainder cons were received from the newspaper reviewers. Walter Macken was welcomed for his performance in the lead, with pretty Maggie McNamera receiving compliments from all. Outright pros were filed by News, Mirror, World Telegram & Sun and Newark News critics who found the Irish folk drama charming. Chapman News, admitted he was such a sucker for anything with an Irish dialect that plot made little difference. Divided opinions were given by Atkinson, Times, and Watts, Post, who enjoyed most of play, but wished it had been better. Negative criticisms were recorded by Herald Tribune, Compass, Journal American, Eagle and Women's Wear appraisers who just thought it was a dull, poorly written play. Stewart Chaney's sets received compliments.

The Small Hours-National, 2/15/51-3/3/51. Mr. and Mrs. George Kaufman's first joint writing effort drew disappointment of five weekly critics. Donald Oenslager's sets received most of the praise in the 26 scene production. Acting talents of Dorothy Stickney and Paul McGrath were praised by critics of Time, Newsweek, Cue, New Yorker and Variety; they didn't think play was up to usual Kaufman standard.

Editorial Pros & Cons

Legitimate theatre is one of the few phases of entertainment industry where talented youngsters can not only get a hearing, but can become stars overnight. A half dozen thrilled newcomers can attest to this wonderful fact this very season. Other phases of the business seem to favor giving more jobs to the already fully employed.

- - - - - ' A Key to NYC Criticism At A Glance ' - - - - -

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will be hits. "So-So" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the shows for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

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| 1. NY Times | 11. Women's Wear Daily | 21. Freeman |
| 2. NY Herald Tribune | 12. Wall Street Journal | 22. Commonweal |
| 3. NY News | 13. Journal of Commerce | 23. Cue |
| 4. NY Mirror | 14. George Joan Nathan | 24. Chr.Sci.Monitor |
| 5. NY Compass | 15. Ward Morehouse | 25. Sat.Review Lit. |
| 6. NY Post | 16. Morning Telegraph | 26. Newsweek |
| 7. NY Journal American | 17. Variety | 27. Time |
| 8. World Telegram & Sun | 18. Billboard | 28. Nation |
| 9. Brooklyn Eagle | 19. Theatre Arts | 29. New Republic |
| 10. Newark News | 20. New Leader | 30. New Yorker |

ANGEL IN THE PAWNSHOP-Booth, 1/18/51. Pro: 3-6-8-10-11-12-13-18-30. Con: 1-2-4-5-7-9-15-17-23-26-27-29.

AFFAIRS OF STATE-Music Box, 9/25/50. Pro: 2-3-4-5-7-8-13-17-18-27-30. Con: 1-6-9-10-11-12-14-15-19-20-22-24-25-26-29.

BILL. BOCK AND CANDLE-Berrymore, 11/14/50. Pro: 22 votes. Con: 2-6-15-17-19-20-22-

CALL ME MADAM-Imperial, 10/12/50. Pro: 23 votes. Con: 18-19-28-29. So-So: 3.

THE COCKTAIL PARTY-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 1-8-12-20-22-25-29. So-So: 14

THE COUNTRY GIRL-Lyceum, 11/10/50. Pro: 22 votes. Con: 4-8-14-27-28-30.

DARKNESS AT NOON-Booth, 1/13/51. Pro: 15 votes. Con: 1-14-17-22-24-26-29. So-So: 5-12-13-23.

GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES-Ziegfeld, 12/8/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 6-28. So-So: 14-18-22-23-27.

GUYS AND DOLLS-46th St.Theatre, 11/24/50. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 28. None: 16.

THE HAPPY TIME-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 20 votes. Con: 5-6-15-19-26-27-28-30.

THE HIGH GROUND-48th St. Theatre, 2/20/51. Pro: 4-6-7-10. Con: 1-2-3-5-8-9-

KISS ME KATE-Shubert, 12/31/48. Pro: 27 votes. Con: 29. None: 21-28.

THE LADY'S NOT FOR BURNING-Royale, 12/8/50. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 3-11-29. So-So: 17-30.

THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 14. So-So: 2-27-30.

OUT OF THIS WORLD-Century, 12/21/50. Pro: 4-5-7-6-8-10-11-13-23-29-30. So-So: 2. Con: 1-3-9-12-17-18-19-20-21-22-26-27-24.

SEASON IN THE SUN-Cort, 9/28/50. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 9-11-20-24-28. So-So: 10.

SECOND THRESHOLD-Morosco, 1/2/51. Pro: 1-2-3-5-6-7-8-10-11-12-22-25-26-30. Con: 4-9-13-14-17-18-20-23-27-28.

SOUTH PACIFIC-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 1-2-3-4-6-7-8-11-13-15-16-17-18-19-24-25-30. Con: 27. So-So: 23. None: 5-9-10-12-14-20-21-28-29.

THE ROSE TATTOO-Martin Beck, 2/3/51. Pro: 15 votes. Con: 4-6-7-14-24-27. So-So: 8.

TWENTIETH CENTURY-Fulton, 12/24/50. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 5-24-28. None: 4-12-14-15-16-19-21-25.

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' Green Room Department '

ANTA ALBUM PLANS...Ten drama critics helped ANTA officials plan outlines of April 15th benefit at ANTA Playhouse. Annual affair will feature stars playing in roles made famous by other players. Theme of show will be "The First Fifty Years". Critics were urged to think of scenes to be included, but they did agree on the dice shooting scene from *Guys and Dolls* and a scene from a Shaw play. Morehouse, WT&S, and Sheaffer, Eagle, expect Album to be most exciting to date if it sticks to this plan.

COLUMN TIPS...Herald Tribune still considering "all sorts of people" to fill that drama critic spot, whispers Winchell, Mirror...Elmer Rice was going to blast critics for penning Not For Children, reports Kilgallen, Journal American.

TICKET TROUBLES...Theatre angel Irving Smith, Jr., suggested to Variety editor that ticket scalping could be reduced by setting sliding scale of prices for orchestra seats. Front seats might cost up to \$15, thus cutting the demand but still giving the speculator a good markup...Chapman, News, made telephone survey of ticket agencies and discovered that McBride's had seats for 21 of the 25 shows playing that evening.

ADAPTATION CREED...Adaptations of novels for the stage must be so contrived as to be completely intelligible to playgoers who may never have heard of the novel, and at the same time satisfying to those familiar with it, comments Stage.

POLITICAL "BUDD"...Novelists and playwrights have become carriers of political ideas because the crucial political problems of our time have become once again the old moral problems, analyzes Lerner, Post. Political columnist feels it is heartbreaking to see such a fine, moving play as Billy Budd fail, at the same time that Koestler's Darkness At Noon is a hit. Melville, long before the latter, probed into the moral political questions of human choice.

INTERNATIONAL ANTA...Though March has been designated by ANTA as International Theatre Month, Rice, Post, discovers that it is really always international month at ANTA. The State Department now clears all theatrical matters between countries through the agency. While touring companies make their arrangements through the group.

CANADIAN VIEWS...Flop of French Canadian favorite Ti-Coq in New York is further proof that our northern neighbor's taste is slightly different muses Sandwell, Herald Tribune. To Canadian audiences the play had an important significance, for it dealt with a special problem of interest. Several Canadians critics have blasted their New York colleagues for panning their favorite show.

TIME BEST BETS...Time magazine selected following as "Best Bets on Broadway" - Billy Budd, Darkness At Noon, Twentieth Century, *Guys and Dolls*, Bell, Book & Candle, *The Lady's Not For Burning*, Call Me Madam, *The Member of the Wedding*, South Pacific and Kiss Me Kate.

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' Theatre News Round Up '

Shows that closed include Peep Show, Razzle Dazzle, The King of Friday's Men, Springtime Folly, Billy Budd and The Small Hours...Nick Kenny, Mirror, starts daily 15 minute WMCA program featuring commentary and music...Bill Slater takes over WABD Broadway to Hollywood show...Roland Cote, critic of Montreal's *Le Canada*, demands apology from playwright-actor Jean Louis Roux who slapped his after former panned his Rose Latulippe...Voice of America will broadcast Darkness At Noon overseas... American Theatre Wing registration for spring term closing.

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' Interview Hi-Lights '
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MAX GORDON...Veteran producer is bitter over panning his recent The Small Hours received from critics, Morehouse, WT&S, discovered. He sees a real danger in losing outside capital because of the power of two morning papers have in making or breaking a play. With lower costs a producer could fight a bad set of reviews. Gordon pondered what might happen if a manager brought a show in without inviting the press to review it, just taking his chances on public acceptance.

WALTER MACKEN...The King of Friday's Men star detailed the background of the Abbey Players to CBS TV Lilli Palmer. The actors deplored Yeats who had built up an odd way to deliver his poetic dramas. Actually the famous poet-playwright was a dictator at the Abbey, doing just the opposite of what the public wanted.

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' Digests of Current Reviews '
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Razzle Dazzle-Arena, 2/19/51-2/24/51. New York's first musical in the round, presented in Hotel Edison received mildly favorable reviews from Variety, Billboard and Cue critics; while Newsweek critic penned entire show as amateurish. Though production foled it does prove that this type of musical has many advantages over regular type productions, notes Hobe, Variety. Francis, Billboard, found some bright and amusing moments in show, but it sparkled only fitfully. While Gabriel, & Cue, thought the show got better as it went along. Once again Dorothy Greener won top honors in the Heilwell-Lynn-Thomas production; while sketches and music were termed undistinguished.

Not For Children-Coronet, 2/13/51-2/17/51. Playwright's Company production of Elmer Rice's new play received additional panning from the weekly critics. They continued pun game on title started by the daily reviewers. Morehouse, WT&S, suggested the play starring Betty Field and Elliot Nugent which opened in Bridgeport should have been left on US Route 1, while Beaufort, CCM, thinks it was a closet drama that should have stayed in Rice's closet. Gibbs, New Yorker, was sure that neither he nor the actors knew what play was all about.

Billy Budd-Biltmore, 2/10/51-3/3/51. Kerr, Commonweal, and Shipley, New Leader, penned adaptation by Cox and Chapman of the Melville novel. Former blamed them for not giving the material any theatrical tension; latter thought they missed in conveying author's original moods and ideas. But Marshall, Nation, found the production staged by Norris Houghton interesting and moving; though she did find third act weak. She praised entire cast, while Kerr thought only Dennis King conveyed any realism to part.

Ti-Coq-Broadhurst, 2/9/51-2/10/51. Fridolin's French Canadian play which lasted only three performances received the delayed praises of three weekly critics. Glurmen, New Republic, thought it contained some of the best character acting seen in a long time. Kerr, Commonweal, found it possible to understand the Canadian enthusiasm for it and the inevitable American impatience. Shipley, New Leader, agreed that opening scenes were warm hearted, natural and friendly.

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' Legit Stuff '
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Mayor Impallitteri will serve as Honorary Collie at Lamb's Public Gambol on April 14th...Chamberlain Brown to continue his nation-wide lecture tour through March...Association of Theatrical Press Agents and Managers feuding with Publicists Guild, each attempting to organize TV press agents...Punyon Fund Ticket office now located in Hotel Astor lobby..."Shavian Vespers" were held by Shaw Society of America at their first annual meeting.

